

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A splicing system ~~capable of splicing~~ configured to splice successive rolls of supply web to provide a continuous web to an applicator, said system comprising:

a first ~~[[and]]~~ spindle configured to support a first supply roll comprising a first web material;

~~a second roll of web supported respectively on first and second spindles for directing the first and second webs toward a splicing station~~ spindle configured to support a second supply roll comprising a second web material; and

a splicing station comprising:

~~a first knife elements for cutting a~~ element configured to cut the first web passing through the splicing station material;

a second knife element configured to cut the second web material;

~~a first staging areas where successive ends of the webs to be spliced are placed and held for splicing~~ area configured to hold an end portion of the first web material in a fixed position;

a second staging area configured to hold an end portion of the second web material in a fixed position; and

a pair of pinch rollers positioned one on each side of the web for closing on the first web and the free end of the second web to form configured to form a splice; and between the first web material and the end portion of the second web material or between the second web material and the end portion of the first web material, wherein the pair of pinch rollers are spaced apart and form the splice by coming together

~~a control capable of simultaneously closing the pinch rollers on the web and actuating a knife element to cut the first web.~~

Claim 2 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 1, further comprising a first ~~and a second~~ series of rollers for placing a reverse curl in ~~[[a]] the first web being unwound material and a second series of rollers for placing a reverse curl in the second web material.~~

Claim 3 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 1, wherein ~~said staging areas comprise support plates for supporting a free end of the second web, said plates including a device being capable of actively holding the web ends in position on said plates~~ the first staging area comprises a first plate and the second staging area comprises a second plate.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 3, wherein ~~said device capable of actively holding the web ends in position includes plates having~~ the first plate has a series of holes for placing subatmospheric pressure on a surface of the first web such that the free end of the web remains in place on said plate prior to splicing the web material and the second plate has a series of holes for placing subatmospheric pressure on a surface of the second web material.

Claims 5-6 (cancelled)

Claim 7 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 1, wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the pair of pinch rollers comprise a pair of rollers spaced apart along the path of the web, means for rapidly bringing the rollers toward each other to bring the web therebetween into intimate engagement, and motor means to bring the rollers together comprises an upper roller and a lower roller and the upper roller and/or the lower roller is attached to a spring that compresses when the pair of rollers come together to form the splice.

Claim 8 (cancelled)

Claim 9 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 3, ~~wherein 1, further comprising the first supply roll comprising the first web material, the second supply roll comprising the second web material, and a piece of splicing tape~~ [[is]] positioned on the end portion of the first web material or the end portion of the second web ~~[[and]] material, wherein the piece of splicing tape has an unattached portion that extends~~ [[into]] between the pair of pinch rollers to aid in splicing the first and second webs together forming the splice.

Claim 10 (cancelled)

Claim 11 (currently amended): The ~~splicing~~ splicing system of claim ~~[[3]] 1, wherein said applicator is further comprising a tape applicator for applying adhesive coated web to a carton configured to receive the spliced web material and apply the spliced web material to a substrate.~~

Claims 12-14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 1, further comprising the first supply roll comprising the first web material and the second supply roll comprising the second web material, wherein said webs comprise the first web material and/or the second web material comprises a backing selected from the group consisting of paper, polymeric film and combinations thereof.

Claim 16 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 1, further comprising the first supply roll comprising the first web material and the second supply roll comprising the second web material, wherein said webs comprise the first web material and/or the second web material comprises a paper backing.

Claim 17 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 1, further comprising the first supply roll comprising the first web material and the second supply roll comprising the second web material, wherein ~~said webs comprise~~ the first web material and/or the second web material comprises a tacky adhesive.

Claim 18 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim ~~[[1]]~~ 17, wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the tacky adhesive is selected from the group consisting of hot melt adhesive, hot melt remoistenable adhesive, water dispersible hot melt adhesive, biodegradable hot melt adhesive, and repulpable hot melt adhesive.

Claim 19 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 9, wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the piece of splicing tape comprises pressure sensitive adhesive.

Claim 20 (currently amended): The splicing system of claim 15, wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the backing ~~further comprises~~ has a surface and at least a portion of the surface is coated with a release coating ~~disposed on at least one surface of said backing.~~

Claim 21 (new): A splicing system capable of splicing successive rolls of supply web, comprising:

a first and second spindle configured for supporting a first and second roll of web material, respectively, and for directing the first and second web materials toward at least one splicing station;

the splicing station comprising at least one knife element for cutting the first or second web material as it passes through the splicing station; at least one staging area where successive ends of the first or second web material can be placed and held for splicing; and rollers positioned one on each side of the first or second web material for closing on the first or second web material to form a splice; and

a control capable of simultaneously closing the rollers on the first or second web material and actuating the knife element to cut the first or second web material, wherein the knife element

comprises a fixed cutting blade; an anvil for pressing the first or second web material against the fixed cutting blade; and a knife element motor configured to move the anvil against the first or second web material and withdraw the anvil from the first or second web material.

Claim 22 (new): The splicing system of claim 21, wherein the fixed cutting blade is positioned between two blocks, the blocks and the anvil each have surfaces adjacent to the first or second web material, the surfaces of the blocks and anvil are at least partially coated with a release agent to prevent the first or second web material from sticking to the surfaces of the blocks and anvil, and the blocks are capable of retracting to expose the fixed cutting blade when the blocks are engaged by the anvil.

Claim 23 (new): The splicing system of claim 21, wherein the rollers comprise a pair of rollers spaced apart on either side of the first or second web material, and the splicing system further comprises a roller motor configured to move the rollers toward one another to splice the first or second web material.

Claim 24 (new): The splicing system of claim 21, further comprising the first supply roll comprising the first web material, the second supply roll comprising the second web material, and a piece of splicing tape positioned on the free end of the first or second web material, wherein the piece of splicing tape extends between the rollers to aid in forming the splice.

Claim 25 (new): The splicing system of claim 1, wherein the first staging area is substantially fixed against movement in a first pull direction, the second staging area is substantially fixed against movement in a second pull direction, the first pull direction is a direction in which the end portion of the first web material moves immediately after it is spliced to the second web material, and the second pull direction is a direction in which the end portion of the second web material moves immediately after it is spliced to the first web material.

Claim 26 (new): The splicing system of claim 2, wherein the first series of rollers comprises a first upstream roller and a first downstream roller, the second series of rollers comprises a second upstream roller and a second downstream roller, the first upstream roller is upstream of the first downstream roller relative to the first web material as it moves along a first path, the second upstream roller is upstream of the second downstream roller relative to the second web material as it moves along a second path, the first upstream roller and the first downstream roller are concave to guide the first web material along the first path, and the second upstream roller and the second downstream roller are concave to guide the second web material along the second path.

Claim 27 (new): The splicing system of claim 26, wherein the first upstream roller has a first upstream roller concave portion, the first downstream roller has a first downstream roller concave portion, the second upstream roller has a second upstream roller concave portion, the second downstream roller has a second downstream roller concave portion, the first downstream roller concave portion defines a narrower channel than the first upstream roller concave portion, and the second downstream roller concave portion defines a narrower channel than the second upstream roller concave portion.

Claim 28 (new): The splicing system of claim 1, further comprising a festoon pulley that slides along a support to control the tension on the first web material or the second web material.

Claim 29 (new): A splicing station, comprising:
a first knife element configured to cut a first web material;
a second knife element configured to cut a second web material;
a first staging plate configured to hold an end portion of the first web material in a fixed position;
a second staging plate configured to hold an end portion of the second web material in a fixed position; and

a pair of pinch rollers configured to form a splice between the first web material and the end portion of the second web material or between the second web material and the end portion of the first web material, wherein the pair of pinch rollers are spaced apart and form the splice by coming together.

Claim 30 (new): The splicing station of claim 29, wherein the first staging plate has a series of holes for placing subatmospheric pressure on a surface of the first web material and the second staging plate has a series of holes for placing subatmospheric pressure on a surface of the second web material.

Claim 31 (new): The splicing system of claim 29, further comprising a festoon pulley that slides along a support to control the tension of the first web material or the second web material.

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 3. This sheet replaces the original sheet of drawings. In Fig. 3, reference numeral 121 has been deleted.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

Annotated Sheet Showing Changes